

Message Text

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LIMITED OFFICIAL USE SECTION 1 OF 2 MADRID 2924

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SUBJECT: CATALUNA PREPARES FOR ELECTIONS

1. SUMMARY: AMCONGEN BARCELONA REPORTS THAT THROUGHOUT CATALUNA, BUT IN THE PROVINCIAL CAPITALS IN PARTICULAR, THE PACE OF POLITICAL ACTIVITY HAS QUICKENED AND SHOWS NO SIGN OF ABATING, AS THE SERIOUS BUSINESS OF ORGANIZING AND PUTTING TOGETHER ELECTORAL LISTS HAS BEGUN IN EARNEST. THE CENTER, PARTICULARLY IF IT IS UNIFIED, COULD RECEIVE AS MUCH AS HALF THE VOTE, WITH THE SOCIALISTS GARNERING PERHAPS 20 PERCENT, THE COMMUNISTS SECURING 10-15 PERCENT AND THE RIGHT TRAILING WITH MAYBE 10 PERCENT. THE EXTREMELY IMPORTANT IMMIGRANT VOTE IS HARD TO PREDICT, ALTHOUGH IT MAY WELL SPREAD ACROSS THE SPECTRUM, BUT SKEWED SOMEWHAT TO THE LEFT. END SUMMARY.

2. CONGEN BARCELONA, AS PART OF OUR EFFORT TO PROVIDE THE DEPT WITH PRE-ELECTION SNAPSHOTS OF VARIOUS IMPORTANT REGIONS AND PROVINCES, HAS FILED THE FOLLOWING REPORT ON POLITICAL ATMOSPHERICS IN CATALUNA (THE PROVINCES OF BARCELONA, GERONA, LERIDA, AND TARRAGONA).

3. ALL RECENT CATALAN POLLS SHOW 40-60 PERCENT OF THE ELECTORATE

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EITHER IGNORANT OF OR INDIFFERENT TO THE POLITICAL BATTLE RAGING AROUND THEM. MOST OBSERVERS ATTRIBUTE THIS TO THE WIDESPREAD LACK OF POLITICAL PREPARATION AND THE BEWILDERING ARRAY OF ACRONYMS SCATTERED ACROSS THE POLITICAL LANDSCAPE.

4. EVEN SO, POLITICAL ACTIVITY IS UBIQUITOUS AND UNCEASING. IN A RECENT TWO-DAY STRETCH, THERE WERE 40-ODD POLITICAL MEETINGS

IN THE FOUR CATALAN PROVINCES, WHICH RANGED IN SIZE FROM A RALLY OF SOME 5,000 IN BARCELONA PROPER TO VARIOUS MEETINGS OF 50 TO 100 PEOPLE IN THE OUTLYING PROVINCES. ALL PARTIES ARE UTILIZING THEIR HIGH VISIBILITY FIGURES TO GET OUT THE CROWDS AND BUILD ENTHUSIASM; IN FACT, THE SAME FACES SEEM TO BE APPEARING BEFORE THE SAME GROUPS AT FAIRLY REGULAR INTERVALS. THE LOCAL "COLEGIOS" OF DOCTORS, LAWYERS, ECONOMISTS AND OTHER PROFESSIONALS ARE AMONG THE FAVORITE STOPS ON THE CATALAN HUSTINGS, WHILE CHURCHES, NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATIONS AND UNION HALLS ALSO ARE REGULARLY VISITED. THE GENERAL ATMOSPHERE IS MUCH LIKE THAT IN THE US DURING A NATIONAL ELECTION, WITH THE IMPORTANT DIFFERENCE THAT RADIO AND TELEVISION HAVE THUS FAR NOT BEEN AVAILABLE TO THE PROTAGONISTS.

5. LOCAL GOVTS HAVE GENERALLY BEEN TOLERANT IF NOT ENTHUSIASTIC ABOUT THIS FRENETIC POLITICAL ACTIVITY. BUT THEY HAVE NOT BEEN CONSISTENT: IN BARCELONA THE NON-MARXIST PARTIES AND THE CATALAN COMMUNISTS (PSUC) HAVE GENERALLY HAD NO DIFFICULTY OBTAINING AUTHORIZATION FOR MEETINGS, WHILE EXTREME LEFT GROUPS HAVE EXPERIENCED GREAT DIFFICULTY; IN CONTRAST, IN GERONA MODERATE PARTIES HAVE BEEN REFUSED PERMISSION FOR MEETINGS WHICH HAS BEEN GRANTED THE PSUC.

6. THE PRESS HAS INCREASED ITS COVERAGE OF POLITICAL ACTIVITY, WITH BARCELONA'S "LA VANGUARDIA," FOR EXAMPLE, DEVOTING FROM 4 TO 8 PAGES TO SUCH SUBJECTS. (WELL KNOWN CATALAN POLITICIANS SUCH AS PUJOL, TRIAS FARGAS AND CANELLAS ARE IN SUCH DEMAND FOR INTERVIEWS AND SPEECHES THAT THEY ARE PRACTICALLY INACCESSIBLE.) THE PRESS ALSO IS PLAYING A POSITIVE ROLE IN EDUCATING LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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THE ELECTORATE, WITH RECENT EXAMPLES BEING A SERIES OF THE WORKINGS OF THE ELECTORAL LAW AND GRAPHIC ANALYSES OF HOW THE D'HONDT FORMULA WORKS IN PRACTICE. BUT IS ALSO HAS BEEN AN ACCURATE REFLECTION OF THE GENERALIZED POLITICAL CONFUSION, RUSHING INTO PRINT WITH ALL MANNER OF SPECULATION.

7. LOOKING AHEAD, THE OUTCOME OF THE ELECTION IN CATALUNA IS LIKELY TO TURN ON THE INTERPLAY OF TWO IMPORTANT FACTORS: CATALAN NATIONALISM AND THE REACTION TO IT OF THE NON-CATALANS RESIDENT IN THE REGION; AND THE QUESTION WHETHER THE VOTERS HERE ARE BASICALLY SATISFIED WITH THE WAY THINGS ARE AND WILL OPT FOR MODERATION AND GRADUAL REFORM OR WILL WANT MORE RAPID AND RADICAL CHANGE. THE BASIC CONTEST IN CATALUNA AND PARTICULARLY IN BARCELONA MAY TEND TO BE MORE ALONG THE LINES OF CENTER VERSUS LEFT (RATHER THAN CENTER VERSUS RIGHT, WHICH IS WEAK IN CATALUNA) THAN IN THE REST OF SPAIN.

8. THE STAR PLAYERS AT WRITING ARE:

-- COMMUNISTS: PSUC (PARTIT SOCIALISTA UNIFICAT DE CATALUNA--

CATALAN BRANCH OF THE PCE);
-- DEMOCRATIC LEFT: PSC-C (PARTIT SOCIALISTA DE CATALUNA-CONGRES);
FEDERACIO CATALANA DEL PSOE;
-- CENTER-LEFT: PSC-R (PARTIT SOCIALISTA DE CATALUNYA-EX
REAGRUPAMENT); ERC (ESQUERRA REPUBLICANA DE CATALUNYA); EDC
(ESQUERRA DEMOCRATICA DE CATALUNYA); CDC (CONVERGENCIA DE-
MOCRATICA DE CATALUNYA);
-- CENTER-RIGHT: UDC (UNIO DEMOCRATICA DE CATALUNYA--MEMBER OF
CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC "TEAM"); CENTRE CATALA; LIGA DE CATALUNA;
--RIGHT: PPC (PARTIT POPULAR CATALA, WHICH IS LINKED TO CENTRO
DEMOCRATICO AND PROBABLY WOULD BE CHARACTERIZED AS CENTER-RIGHT
NATIONALLY); CC (CONCORDIA CATALANA); AP (ALIANZA POPULAR).
BECAUSE OF THE STRONG CATALAN AVERSION TO "SUCURSALISMO," THOSE
PARTIES LINKED TO MADRID-BASED GROUPS--SUCH AS PSUC, PSOE, UDC,
PPC AND AP--ATTEMPT TO PLAY DOWN THIS CONNECTION, WITH THE
RIGHT BEING LEAST SUCCESSFUL IN ESTABLISHING CONVINCING CATALAN
CREDENTIALS.
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9. WITH 33 LOWER HOUSE SEATS AT STAKE IN BARCELONA ALONE, AND
47 (OUT OF 350 - 14 PERCENT) OVER-ALL IN CATALUNA, POLITICAL
MANEUVERING AND NEGOTIATION HAVE PROCEEDED AT A HOT PACE, AND
A NUMBER OF COALITIONS ALREADY HAVE BEEN FORMED:
-- ON THE LEFT, THE PSUC (WHICH, AT WRITING, STILL HAS NOT BEEN

LEGALIZED) INTENDS TO RUN ALONE UNDER ITS OWN BANNER AND HAS ALREADY PRESENTED ITS LISTS OF CANDIDATES. BEST GUESSES ARE THAT IT MIGHT DRAW 10-15 PERCENT OF THE VOTE.

-- RAVENTOS' PSC-C AND THE PSOE ARE WILL ON THEIR WAY TO FORGING UNIFIED LISTS IN THE 4 PROVINCES, WITH THE PSOE TRADING ITS ORGANIZATION AND APPEAL TO THE IMMIGRANT VOTE FOR PSC-C'S CATALAN IMAGE AND, PERHAPS, NAME. TOGETHER, THEY COULD DRAW UP TO 20 PERCENT OF THE VOTE.

-- IN THE CENTER, JOSEP VERDE'S PSC-R AND HERIBERT BARRERA'S ERC HAVE PACTED WITH THE MINOR FRONT NACIONAL AND ESTAT CATALA TO FORM THE FRONT D'ESQUERRES. AT THE SAME TIME, JORDI PUJOL'S CDC AND TRIAS FARGAS'S EDC HAVE JOINED FORCES WHILE ANTON CANELLAS'S UDC AND THE CENTRE CATALA OF JOAN MAS CANTI AND JOAQUIN MOLINS HAVE ALSO ACHIEVED A LOOSE WORKING AGREEMENT. ALL KEY CENTER LEADERS--PUJOL, TRIAS FARGAS, CANELLAS, BARRERA--SEEK TO FORM A CENTER-LEFT/CENTER-RIGHT COALITION GROUPING THEIR RESPECTIVE PARTIES. THIS HAS NOT YET PROVEN POSSIBLE FOR A VARIETY OF REASONS, THE MAJOR ONE BEING LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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DIFFERENCES OVER MODALITIES FOR NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE GOVT ON CATALAN AUTONOMY. JOSEP TARRADELLAS, PRESIDENT-IN-EXILE OF THE GENERALITAT (CATALUNA'S SECOND REPUBLIC/CIVIL WAR-ERA AUTONOMOUS GOVT) AND THE PARTIES CLOSELY ALLIED TO HIM (ERC AND PSC-R) HOPE TO PROMOTE DIRECT NEGOTIATIONS BETWEEN TARRADELLAS, WHO SOME VIEW AS THE EMBODIMENT OF CATALAN AUTONOMY, AND THE GOVT, AND THEY WERE ESPECIALLY CRITICAL OF PUJOL'S PARTICIPATION AS THE CATALAN REPRESENTATIVE ON THE OPPOSITION'S "COMMITTEE OF TEN." PUJOL'S RECENT WITHDRAWAL FROM THE COMMITTEE, AS THE RESULT OF THIS PRESSURE AND HIS INABILITY TO OBTAIN A PUBLICLY REQUESTED MEETING WITH SUAREZ ON THE REGIONAL QUESTION, HAS ENHANCED THE POSSIBILITY OF A BROAD CENTER COALITION. IF SUCH A UNION IS FORMED IT PROBABLY COULD DRAW 40-50 PERCENT OF THE VOTE.

-- ON THE RIGHT THE MAJOR FORCES PPC (CENTRO DEMOCRATICO), CC AND AP ARE MORE OR LESS FUNCTIONING COALITIONS AND THE POSSIBILITIES OF BROADER GROUPINGS ARE FAR FROM CLEAR. THE ROLE TO BE PLAYED BY CONCORDIA CATALANA, BEING FORMED BY PRESIDENT OF THE BARCELONA DIPUTACION JUAN ANTONIO SAMARANCH, IS ESPECIALLY NEBULOUS BUT COULD BE IMPORTANT. PRESENT INDICATIONS ARE THAT SAMARANCH INTENDS CONCORDIA TO BE MORE OF A COORDINATING MECHANISM THAN A SEPARATE PARTY. HE HAS NOT SPELLED OUT THE DETAILS, BUT AT WRITING SEEMS TO BE LEANING TO FRAGA'S AP. AT PRESENT MOST OBSERVERS ESTIMATE THAT THESE CONSERVATIVE GROUPS, MOST OF WHICH HAVE NO ROOTS IN CATALUNYA, WILL PROBABLY NOT POLL MORE THAN 10 PERCENT OF THE VOTE IN BARCELONA--PERHAPS MORE IN THE OTHER THREE CATALAN PROVINCES.

10. ONE OF THE MAJOR UNKNOWN AND PRIMARY CONCERNS OF ALL PARTIES IS THE ATTITUDE OF THE "IMMIGRANTS," THE MANY SPANIARDS

WHO HAVE MOVED TO CATALUNA FROM OTHER AREAS, ESPECIALLY ANDALUCIA, SEEKING JOBS. FIRM FIGURES ARE HARD TO COME BY BUT RECENT ESTIMATES INDICATE THESE NEWCOMERS ACCOUNT FOR ROUGHLY 41 PERCENT OF TOTAL REGISTERED VOTERS IN BARCELONA AND 36 PERCENT IN CATALUNA. THE ATTITUDE OF THE CATALAN POLITICIANS AND PARTIES TOWARD THESE "OTHER CATALANS" IS HIGHLY AMBIVALENT. LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PUBLICLY THEY WELCOME THE IMMIGRANTS, PLEDGE EQUAL TREATMENT, CLAIM ASSIMILATION PRESENTS NO PROBLEM AND DECLARE THAT A CATALAN IS SIMPLY ONE WHO WORKS AND LIVES IN CATALUNA. PRIVATELY THEY EXPRESS GREAT CONCERN OVER THE IMPACT ON CATALAN CULTURE AND STRONG PREJUDICE TO THE EXTENT OF WISHING THE IMMIGRANTS "WOULD GO BACK TO WHERE THEY CAME FROM." THERE IS ALSO A LATENT FEAR OF "LERROUXISMO" (DEMAGOGUERY BASED ON CULTURAL DIFFERENCES, EXPLOITED BY ALEJANDRO LERROUX IN THE EARLY 1900'S) WHICH MIGHT PIT IMMIGRANT AGAINST CATALAN. NO ONE KNOWS HOW THIS LARGE BODY OF VOTERS WILL REACT. THE BEST INFORMED OBSERVERS, HOWEVER, BELIEVE THE IMMIGRANTS WILL NOT VOTE AS A BLOC BUT RATHER WILL TEND TO SPREAD ACROSS THE POLITICAL SPECTRUM THOUGH PERHAPS SOMEWHAT SKEWED TOWARD THE LEFT.

11. PARTY PLATFORMS, BEYOND THE OVERRIDING GENERAL THEME OF CATALAN AUTONOMY, ARE AS YET ILL-DEFINED AND LITTLE PUBLICIZED. PARTY PROPAGANDA AND DISCUSSION HAVE TENDED TO FOCUS ON SUCH TOPICS AS RESTORATION OF THE AUTONOMY STATUTE OF 1932, AMNESTY, LEGALIZATION OF PARTIES, AND RETURN OF THE GENERALITAT AND TARRADELLAS. SUCH BASIC POPULAR CONCERNS AS INFLATION AND JOBS HAVE BEEN LARGELY IGNORED EXCEPT FOR CLAIMS THAT THE SITUATION WILL IMPROVE IF CATALUNA ACHIEVES AUTONOMY. HOW THE ELECTORATE WILL REACT TO THIS LIGHT TREATMENT OF BREAD AND BUTTER ISSUES IS ANYONE'S GUESS. GIVEN THIS LACK OF CLEAR PROGRAMMATIC DEFINITION, PERSONALITIES MAY WEIGH HEAVILY IN THIS FIRST ELECTION; AND IN THIS RESPECT THE CENTER HAS A DECIDED ADVANTAGE SINCE IT INCLUDES THE BEST-KNOWN POLITICIANS IN CATALUNA. STABLER

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